**READING #2 DISCUSSION SHEET**

Use the following questions to guide your reading of the second section of *Night*; jot some notes down on a piece of paper while you read in preparation for an in-class discussion on these questions. Use the bullet point questions to help you think about the bold statement. Your notes will be checked for completion at the beginning of our next class.

**Explore the relationship between knowing, madness, and belief.**

* Why does Madame Schächter scream? Why does she later become silent and withdrawn?
* How do people react the first time she screams? How do they respond when her screams continue?
* Is she a madwoman? A prophet? Or a witness? What is the difference between the three labels?
* How is Madame Schächter like Moshe the Beadle? Does she, too, know or sense something that others refuse to believe?
* How do the “veteran” prisoners respond when they discover the newcomers have never heard of Auschwitz? How do you account for their reaction?
* What does it mean to know but not acknowledge what you know? When do people do it?

**Consider how the Germans created terror at Auschwitz.**

* How do the Germans orchestrate the arrival of newcomers to the camp?
* Why don’t they tell the new arrivals what to expect?
* Why do you think the Germans take away the inmates’ personal belongings? Their clothing? Why do they cut off their hair? Tattoo a number on each person’s arm?
* Why does much of this section of the book seem to take place at night?

**Explore the relationship between Eliezer and his father.**

* Eliezer tells the reader, “Eight words spoken quietly, indifferently, without emotion. Eight simple, short words” (page 29). What are those words and why is Eliezer unable to forget them? How do they help Eliezer and his father ling to one another in Auschwitz?
* How does Eliezer respond when his father is beaten for the first time? How does that response affect the way he sees himself? What does he fear is happening to him?
* What advice does Eliezer’s cousin from Antwerp give his father? How is it like the advice the Polish prisoner offers? What do both pieces of advice suggest about the meaning of a word like *family* in a place like Auschwitz?

**Consider the way the Germans systematically strip Eliezer and other prisoners of their identity.**

* How does Eliezer respond to the removal of his clothes and other belongings? To the shaving of his hair? The number tattooed on his arm? How do you account for these responses?
* Primo Levi, who was also at Auschwitz-Birkenau, wrote:

It is not possible to sink lower than this: no human condition is more miserable than this, nor could it conceivably be so. Nothing belongs to us any more; they have taken away our clothes, our shoes, even our hair; if we speak, they will not listen to us, and if they listen, they will not understand. They will even take away our name: and if we want to keep it, we will have to find ourselves the strength to do so, to manage so that behind the name something of us, of us, as we were, remains.[[1]](#endnote-1)

How are Levi’s responses to his initiation into Auschwitz similar to those of Eliezer? What differences seem most striking?

* Wiesel, in recounting his first night in the concentration camp says, “Never shall I forget that night, the first night in the camp, that has turned my life into one long night…” What does it mean for a life to be turned into “one long night”?

1. Primo Levi, *Survival at Auschwitz*, translated by S. Woolf (Collier Books, 1993), 38. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)